

Pierce County Teens Take On Mental Health Stigma, Share Inspiring Personal Stories of Recovery

TACOMA, Wash. – (May 6, 2017)

On May 6th, HI-FYVE Youth Truth hosted “Beyond the Stigma” – an event for teens and adolescents in Pierce County aimed at ending stigma surrounding mental health issues. The event was held at Eastside Assembly of Believers in Tacoma and featured stories, songs, and poems from young people sharing their experiences of recovery from mental health and substance use challenges.

HI-FYVE Youth Truth is the regional Washington State Family, Youth and System Partner Round Table (FYSPRT) for Pierce County. It provides a forum for families, youth, systems, and communities to strengthen sustainable resources by providing community-based approaches to address the individual behavioral health needs of children, youth and families. The group is facilitated through the Optum Pierce Behavioral Health Organization (BHO), which provides crisis services for County residents.

Alleah Haydon, 14, attends HI-FYVE Youth Truth meetings once a week and shared her story about coping with ADHD. She said that labeling people can lead to low self-esteem, and the Youth Truth event was all about ending the stigma that having a diagnosis is a label that determines self-worth.

Haydon is one of three youth leaders who helped plan the HI-FYVE Youth Truth event, along with Malik Banks, 20, and Baltimore Roundtree-Echols, 17, who also designed the logo used on the event program and T-shirts.



The HI-FYVE Youth Truth event featured speakers, presentations and exhibitors from throughout the community.

HI-FYVE Youth Truth

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Optum Pierce BHO Executive Director Bea Dixon attended the event and was inspired by the grassroots, youth movement feel of the atmosphere.

“It is the next generation,” she said. “They’re bringing a different energy to discussions around mental health by sharing their personal stories of recovery. They’re going to bring change into how they, and others, look at behavioral health issues.” Miss Teen Washington Tracy Anderson spoke to the crowd about her own battle with depression and anxiety. She said that now she’s been able to overcome her struggles, she wants to use her position as Miss Teen Washington to help others. “I have a hope that every struggling individual can find their own voice,” said Anderson.

Former Tacoma City Councilwoman and current mayoral candidate Victoria Woodards also spoke at the event, using her time at the mic to open the dialog about mental health. She summed up the event saying, “We’re learning from one another. That’s what community is all about.”

To find out more about participating in or supporting HI-FYVE Youth Truth, contact:

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Participants from the HI-FYVE Youth Truth group included (from left to right): Miriam McBride, Ricky Castillo, Jade Hicks, PaQ'Jon Dickerson (seated), and Malik Banks.



Former Tacoma City Councilwoman and current mayoral candidate Victoria Woodards praised the event as an opportunity to open a community dialog about mental health.

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Washington, D.C. 20201

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